



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12: Facilitation Programmes

ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL OVERSIGHT FRAMEWORK FOR AIR TRANSPORT FACILITATION

(Presented by Saudi Arabia)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Annex 9 — *Facilitation* is founded on 10 core articles of the Chicago Convention, which oblige Member States to comply with international provisions governing the clearance formalities of aircraft, passengers, and cargo by competent authorities, including customs, immigration, agriculture and public health agencies. These provisions aim to minimize operational delays and improve the efficiency of border control procedures. Effective implementation of Annex 9 requires strong coordination among governmental agencies and border authorities.

Although the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) of Annex 9 were first adopted in 1949, their implementation has historically lagged behind that of Annexes related to safety and security. This implementation gap highlights the need for dedicated national oversight mechanisms to ensure consistent monitoring and sustained compliance.

Accordingly, this paper highlights the importance for States of establishing a National Oversight Framework. Developing an Oversight Manual for Air Transport Facilitation would serve as a practical reference to assist Member States in evaluating compliance against Annex 9 SARPs, through standardized procedures and clear methodologies for inspection and oversight. It is recommended that this manual be developed in coordination with relevant stakeholders operating within the airport environment, to ensure clear role delineation and effective inter-agency collaboration.

Such a manual would strengthen national oversight of facilitation services, improve compliance with international standards, and contribute to higher levels of operational performance. Ultimately, it would enhance the passenger experience and the overall efficiency of air transport at both national and international levels.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) encourage Member States to establish a national oversight framework for air transport facilitation, modelled on existing frameworks used for safety and security oversight, to ensure effective and consistent implementation of Annex 9; and

¹ Arabic and English versions provided by Saudi Arabia.

b) request the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to provide technical support and guidance to Member States developing an Oversight Manual for Air Transport Facilitation, which would assist in assessing compliance with Annex 9 SARPs and strengthen institutional mechanisms for implementation and sustainable monitoring.	
<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goal <i>Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible and Reliable Mobility for All</i> .
<i>Financial implications:</i>	No additional financial implications.
<i>References:</i>	Annex 9 — <i>Facilitation</i> Article 22 of Doc 7300, <i>Convention on International Civil Aviation</i> , signed at Chicago on 7 December 1944 and amended by the ICAO Assembly

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Facilitation Programme aims to provide Member States with the necessary tools to maximize the efficiency of border clearance formalities, along with the guidance required to achieve those objectives. At its core, the programme focuses on enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of border control and customs clearance procedures while ensuring full compliance with Annex 9 — *Facilitation* provisions.

1.2 The absence of a clear and comprehensive oversight mechanism to evaluate compliance with the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) of Annex 9 remains one of the primary reasons for the lack of prioritization of facilitation in many States. This highlights the need to establish a National Oversight Framework and develop an Oversight Manual that enables competent national authorities to effectively monitor the implementation of these provisions.

1.3 Such a manual could be based on a coordinated national framework to include the development of relevant legislation, the implementation of specialized training programs, and the allocation of sufficient human and technical resources. This manual would contribute to raising the level of compliance with facilitation services in airports, in line with or exceeding the requirements of Annex 9, while also enhancing operational performance.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The effective national oversight of air transport facilitation requires the designation of a centralized authority responsible for supervising the relevant regulatory requirements, thereby ensuring consistency in application at the national level. While the organizational structure and configuration of this authority remain a matter of national sovereignty, it is recommended that the designated authority works, in coordination with relevant ministries and agencies operating within the airport environment. An Oversight manual would contribute to the standardization of oversight procedures and support the effective and consistent implementation of the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) of Annex 9. Technical focal points from each stakeholder entity would ensure effective coordination and integration of roles, thereby enhance operational efficiency and improve the overall level of facilitation services.

2.2 The Oversight Manual for air transport facilitation would encompass inspection, follow-up, and regular analysis to assess compliance with the SARPs of Annex 9. The successful oversight activities largely depend on the qualifications and competencies of the inspectors assigned to carry them

out. Therefore, this paper recommends that ICAO develop specialized training programs for facilitation inspectors, with a focus on practical aspects of assessment and oversight and equipping them with the necessary technical knowledge and methodologies for the effective use of the manual. These efforts would enhance the quality of audit processes and ensure consistent implementation across various airports and stakeholder agencies.

2.3 As a reference and as part of its commitment to implementing the SARPs of Annex 9 and enhancing the efficiency of air transport operations, Saudi Arabia launched a comprehensive national programme in 2023 to conduct inspections and monitoring of air transport facilitation at international airports. The objective of this programme is to ensure full compliance with Annex 9 provisions and to elevate the level of facilitation services provided to passengers, crew members, cargo and mail.

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